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Love and Other Poems

CLYDE MACDONALD

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LOVE, AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

RUFUS CYRENE MACDONALD.



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LOVE, AND OTHER POEMS.

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L O V E .

O LET me linger in this shady grove ;
Upon this velvet, mossy knoll recline ;
Where I can see the wild-flow'rs weaving spells,
Can feel the tall grass waving round my head,
And hear the merry tinkling of the brook
Making fond love unto its pebbly bed.
Where I can see the squirrels, as they play,
And watch the happy birds from bough to bough.
Where, o'er my head, the trees each other kiss,
Whisp'ring a tale of love from leaf to leaf.
Where, through the arching canopy above,
I can behold bright patches of blue sky,

Fleckered with specks of downy, snow-white clouds.

Here let me linger while the sun goes down,

Leaving a mellow radiance in the woods,

Which changes slowly from bright gold to bronze,

From bronze to gray, from gray to black, till soon,

With golden twinkle, one by one, the stars

Burst through the vault of night, and all the sky

Is thickly studded with the lamps of love.

Now, through the gloomy visted trees, I mark

The faint uprearing of Diana's hair,

Which wavers lightly on the verge of night ;

Follows, at length, with pure effulgence clear,

Her radiant face, and pours upon the earth

The mellow softness of her silvery smile ;

Slowly, with stately grace, she holds her way

Among the bowing throng of vassal stars.

But dark is yet the grove ; the moonbeams reach

Scarcely the lowest branches of the trees,

Like showers of silver hindered in its fall.

The fireflies glimmer, pretty fairy lights,

Which make the darkness darker than it is.

The tinkling brook sounds louder, seems to play

A dancing tune for fairies on its banks ;

And there the fireflies flit to give them light.

'The hum of cricket falls upon mine ear ;
Monotonous and shrill, it seems to voice
The universal air, and lulls my soul
Into a dreamy, contemplative mood.
Now the glory of the night folds round me,
And my soul's harp to Nature's is attuned.
Now do I feel thy presence, come, O Love,
And wrap me in thy blissful, soft embrace !
O Love, sweet stirrer of the human heart ;
Profound alchemist, who can change all thought
Unto thine own soft, passionate yearnings !
Whence is thy power, O Love ? Thou wast ere yet
Fair Eve and Adam blossomed into life ;
For they took happiness from thee, till Hate,
In guise of serpent, stole it half away !
And didst thou not sustain them, when their God
Thundered his dread decree of death and woe ?
Together, though in pain, had they not joy ?
Alone and parted would they not have died ?
'Twas thou, O Love, who brooded o'er the flood,
Mourning the wrack an angry God had made,
And brought the olive-branch to Noah's hand !
O ancient Love ! — but ancient thou art not,
For thou art not of time ; thou art the same

To-day, as when the world was first create !
Unchanged, unchangeable thou art, O Love ;
But not thy forms ; for, as the sentient air
Fills voids and crevices of divers shapes,
So thou canst fill each heart, though differing wide !
No one can strike the strings of Poetry's harp,
And draw from it the true depths of its soul,
Until by thee, O Love, he is inspired !
Love adds new feeling to the poet's soul,
Expands and broadens his wide-stretched embrace
Until, within his arms, like ocean old,
He clasps the world, with all its hopes and fears !
The soul which thou hast purified, O Love,
Sees increased beauty wheresoe'er it looks ;
All Nature speaks to it with native voice,
For, has it not all Nature in itself ?
The pretty buds, bright, glowing gems of earth,
Are letters in thy alphabet, O Love,
By which the poet reads thy meaning clear !
The warbling birds are but thy choristers !
The brooks, trees, the mountains, all are love,
For love is Nature and all Nature love !
Ah, when thou fill'st the eager, longing soul,
The earthly dross is lessened in degree ;

The God-like essence is intensified,
And its faint murmurs swell to stronger tones ;
And then the soul doth revel with delight
Within the inmost hall of Nature's heart ;
Responsive to her ev'ry throb it beats,
And feels the beauty it but half can paint !
The limpid softness of the shimm'ring moon
Thrills silvery notes upon its trembling chords ;
The gentle winds, with balmy, soothing sweep,
Vibrate the soul with melody profound ;
The calm, still presence of the forest trees,
The huge, majestic grandeur of the hills,
The solemn shadows of the wings of night,
Intone a mournful bass upon the soul ;
The pent-up, surging sea, with distant roar,
Plays diapason to the wondrous song !
To all, responsive, does the soul vibrate,
Until 'tis filled with ecstasy of bliss,
And throbs itself to sleep in Nature's arms !
Such are the feelings of the poet's soul,
And if these feelings cannot be expressed,
The soul is still a poet's, though enchained !
Ah, do not think that poets are so rare !
Upon the rainbow, the warm, glowing sun

Paints colors beautiful, which all can see ;
But far beyond these, in ascending scale,
Are others, which the eye cannot behold ;
But Science, though it cannot make them plain
Unto the gazing eye, yet proves them true !
So love-full Nature, though she cannot make
The soul's intensest longings plain in words
Yet, by her mighty test of sympathy,
Proves true the presence of the poet thought !
The sweetest notes are those which thrill the soul
With essence evanescent and unknown ;
The faint remembrance of the angel songs
It used to sing when yet a part of God ;
So sweet and subtle, that the human mind
Can only blindly grope and wondering list,
But can no more express them, than it can,
By reason weak, God's majesty explore !

A SUMMER DREAM.

WE two sat in the hammock, 'neath the trees,
Our fevered brows fanned by the summer
breeze,
Which whispered softly, in the balmy night,
A murmuring tale of love and love's delight.

Caressingly the fragrant night air fell
Around us ; while, with modulated swell,
The keen-voiced cricket piped in endless glee,
Thrilling the night with shrill monotony.

No gleaming moon cast down its glary light,
To mock the grandeur of the solemn night ;
All was deep-dark, save where, in realms afar,
Glittered the golden radiance of a star.

I scarce could see thee in thy milk-white dress ;
But thy fond heart, in loving sweet distress
Beating on mine, was better far than sight ;
Thy soft cheek, pressing mine, dearer than light.

I heard the plaintive music of thy sighs,
And felt, unseen, the languor of thine eyes,
Thy loosened hair, with soft, electric spell,
Swept o'er my face, thrilling where'er it fell.

The dark night throbbed with passion ; joyful love
Voiced all the air and stirred the leaves above ;
Clasped in each other's arms, our souls did seem
To blend in one. Alas, it was a dream !

A T L A S T .

A T last I stand within thy citadel ;
Within the inmost temple of thy heart ;
Thy battlements of pride have been in vain !
And yet, the stronghold newly won, I fain
Would raise the walls again, and then depart
And leave it as it was before it fell !

I stand abashed before this altar pure,
So white and spotless that my swift desire
Seems to profane it with unholy breath !
Within this shrine Love, dreaming, slumbereth !
Ah, shall I let thee slumber, or inspire
Thy soul with power to cherish and endure ?

Lo, Love awakes ! the altar softly gleams
With unaccustomed fires, and richly glows,
With flush of light, the erstwhile pallid shrine !
At last ! at last ! now thou art wholly mine,
A willing vassal ; for thy soul now knows
One moment's love is worth a life of dreams !

CONTEMPT.

AH yes, 'tis true, I loved you once full well ;
Too well for you to ever understand ;
Nor is my love yet dead, although the spell
Has disappeared, which held us hand in hand !

Why, if I love you, am I not the same ?
You ask me that ! Bah ! Do you think my mind
Has grown so weak, that passion's lurid flame
Can make it to deceit forever blind ?

You flush and falter ; ah, you did not think
Your dupe would ever wake, and know surfeit
Of simulated love, and, link by link,
Bind up the chain of all your gross deceit !

I smile to think that I have kissed your lips
And thought their sweetness sacred unto me,
When, like the flowers which the wild bee sips,
They give their honey, questionless and free !

In vain you try, with kiss and fond caress,
To win me back again ; if you but knew
The deep disgust I now for them possess,
You'd keep them for the fools who trust in you !

Your mere deceit I might, in time, forgive ;
But never could my mind hold you exempt
From vulgar commonness ! Love cannot live
Where broods the anger of a just contempt !

I would have clung to you if all the world
Had frowningly condemned, and on your head,
In pharisaic wrath, had fiercely hurled
The cruel burden of its censure dread !

But now, henceforward, you to me are naught ;
I tear your memory from my bleeding heart ;
Blot out the joys with which my soul was fraught ;
And hurl, forever, our two lives apart !

LOVE SONG.

HOW soft the air that plays around my brow ;
How sweet the thoughts that gather in my heart ;
How clear the moon shines on the water now ;
How bright the glances from thy fond eyes start !

Love, I am weary and I fain would rest ;
The melody of Nature brings delight ;
Come, let us float upon the lake's calm breast
And drink the rapture of the balmy night !

Love, let us gaze upon the stars of gold,
That spangle o'er the vault of heavenly blue ;
Let us repeat the tale so often told,
The tale to others old, to us so new !

Mark how the moon drives back the envious mist,
 Edging with light the clouds which fill the air ;
So shall our souls, which holy love has kissed,
 Repell and brighten all the clouds of care !

Love, I am happy ; in thy clinging arms
 I know not care, think not of future pain ;
The soothing quietude of love's sweet balms
 Fills all my wounds and cleanses every stain !

Lips prest to lips : true heart to heart as true ;
 Love thrilling through our beings, soul to soul,
In Nature's wisdom let us both imbue
 Our yearning minds and hasten to her goal !

SERENADE.

COME forth, my love, the moon is shining ;
Come forth, my love for thee I'm pining ;
Haste thee, my love, and roam with me
Through forest glade, o'er flowry lea !

Come, love, the winds, with soft caresses,
Are longing now to kiss thy tresses ;
The nightingale sings for thine ear,
Trilling sweet notes to draw thee near !

The tender buds for thee are grieving,
And perfumed sighs are sadly heaving ;
For thee the glow-worm lights his lamp
And shines above the mosses damp !

All nature calls thee, with deep voices,
And at thy coming Night rejoices :

The stars, with pleasure, glimmer bright,
And leaflets rustle with delight !

And I, and I, for thee am waiting,
My quenchless fire with patience sating !
Come then, sweetheart, haste, to my breast,
That love with thee may sink to rest !



I AM A KING.

I AM a king ! You do not see my crown ?
Ah no, but it is there !
’Tis firmly set above this careworn frown,
In jewels rich and rare !

When was I crowned, and how ? A loving maid,
A wee, sweet, modest thing,
Pressed kisses on my brow, and softly said,
“ My king ! You are my king ! ”

A F A C E .

'T WAS but the vision of a thoughtful face ;
A soul-conveying flash from eye to eye ;
A form of sweet, inimitable grace ;
Seen for a moment as I hastened by.

Ah, that was years ago, and I have gazed,
With languid interest, in eyes that shone
With unshed tears, and lovingly were raised,
In longing suppliance, unto my own.

Fair faces have I seen, flushed with love's pride,
Grow wan and white, in agony of pain ;
Sweet, trembling lips, with loving touch have tried
To rouse the fervor of my heart, in vain.

No face but hers can wake my heart's desire ;
No eyes but hers can gaze into my soul ;
No form but hers can kindle passion's fire ;
No love but hers can be my eager goal.

The world is wide, but we shall meet some day ;
In that one glance our yearning souls did blend ;
The unseen bond can never wear away ;
Some day our hands shall clasp and longings end.

WE TWO.

WHY should we grieve, we two, if all the world
Passed grim and frowning by, and on us hurled
Rough shards and stones, unmerited rebuff !
We still should joy ; for is not love enough ?

Yea, love is everything to you and me ;
For love and you and I are one ; let be
What is to be ; let what will disappear ;
Love cannot change ! Love always will be dear !

What if all else should die ; the moon and sun
Should fade ; yet would we still be one ;
And, in the fervor of our passion sweet,
Could laugh at death, since life would be complete !

IF THOU COULDST KNOW.

IF thou coulds't know that never on my breast
Thy head would rest again ;
That never on thy lips my lips be prest,
Ah, would it cause thee pain?

If thou coulds't know that this love-fervid night
Would be our last to meet,
Would thy fond glances gleam so soft and bright,
My kisses seem so sweet?

If it were so, would this last night remain
A memory untold,
Of languorous joy, of bitter, bitter pain
Which never would grow old?

Would every detail of this night be burned,
 In lines of anguish hot,
Upon your soul that, wheresoe'er you turned,
 It could not be forgot?

In years to come would memory of my kiss
 Thrill softly on thy lips,
And rouse within thee all the melting bliss
 Of which thy soul now sips?

Would thy hand burn — as now — in after years ;
 Would thy cheeks glow with flame ;
Would thy eyes fill with cruel, blinding tears
 When memory spoke my name ?

Or would some other fill my vacant place,
 And rouse thy heart's warm glow ;
Some other's kiss my kisses all efface?
 Ah love, if I could know !

SHE GAVE ME A ROSE.

SHE gave me a rose ! I did not know
Were its petals red, or white as snow ;
I saw but her eyes, with passion aglow,
When she gave me a rose !

She gave me a rose ! I could not tell
If thorns were there ; I felt but the swell
Of her heaving breast, as it rose and fell,
When she gave me a rose !

She gave me a rose ! She did not care
That I cast it down with heedless air ;
For she gave me herself, a flower more fair,
When she gave me a rose !

THE HARP.

I SAT before a harp ; my fingers strayed,
With longing touch, around each throbbing string ;
The chords, responsive, such sweet music made,
As only angels, in our dreamings, sing.

And joy was mine, to think, that it was I
Who had the power to wake such melting strains.
On wings of melody the hours flew by,
While I, entrancéd, heard but Love's refrains.

When, with a crash, my hand, too heavy, fell
Upon a fragile string, which snapped in twain ;
And one harsh discord woke me from my spell,
Wrenching my heart in sudden, cruel pain.

Now silent is the harp ; I do not dare,
 Though longing ever for the music's tone,
To touch the strings, lest discord should be there ;
 Regret is better than a hope o'erthrown !

But ah, the memory of that music dear,
 Still haunts my gloomy soul, so tempest-tossed ;
It wails and moans, in cadence sad and drear,
 The ghost of melodies which I have lost.

FOR YOUR DEAR SAKE.

SINCE the first mortal drank his fill
Of Love's exhilarating wine,
Raising his soul to heights divine,
Triumphant over earthly ill,

Lovers have told what they would stake,
For those they loved ; the same sweet dream,
So old, so new, is now my theme :
What I would do for your dear sake !

'Tis naught to die for one we love ;
To die were pleasure ; but to live,
Far from the fervor love could give,
Ah, that would be all deeds above !

Such sacrifice for you I'd make !
Though from you life were endless death,
If absence saved you one harsh breath,
I'd leave you, Love, for your dear sake !

GOOD NIGHT.

GOOD Night !” the stars say ; but my heart
Whispers to me, “ Ah, do not go !”
And thou ! Dost wish that we should part,
So early, Love ? Ah, no ! no ! no !

Still parting comes, so sad, so sweet ;
More fervent grows each clinging kiss ;
In fond embrace our true souls meet ;
Good night it were to live like this !

“ Good Night !” “ Good Night !” Although in vain
We strive to stop Time’s ceaseless clock,
Yet shall our love unchanged remain,
And we at Time can idly mock !

“ Good Night !” “ Good Night !” “ Good Life !”
“ Good Death !”

Ah no, not death ! What memory drear
Brings up such thought with icy breath,
To bind my heart in nameless fear ?

O life of love ! O love of life !

O doubting heart, what dost thou dread ?

Why wage to-night that fearful strife ?

Leave to the morrow all its dead !

Fill full the present with thy bliss,

O perfect love ! And Night, good Night,

Give us the time for one sweet kiss

Which shall not end till morning light !

MUSINGS.

WHENCE AND WHITHER ?

WHENCE came I here, and whither go I hence?
Whose fiat called me out of nothingness?
What is the source of this insatiate sense,
Which yearns to know the things it can but guess?

O, impotence of mind, which bravely thinks
To soar into the realms all thought above ;
But, vainly struggling, ever backward sinks,
As drops to earth a fluttering, wing-shot dove !

Inexorable veil which hangs between
Our little known, and mysteries long sought,
Against thy power, impassive and serene,
In vain we hurl the engine of our thought !

TO A FLY.

B UZZING and droning, in the sunny air
You flashed about, enjoying pleasure bright,
Unmindful of the future, till my hand,
With awful suddenness, crushed out your life !
And why should you, endowed with Nature's spark
In but a less proportion than myself,
Be subject thus unto my cruel will ?
And why should I, the acme of this life,
Crush out of you the little you enjoy ?
Low in the scale of Nature's handiwork,
Thy life to you is sweet as mine to me !
Man nothing more is than a beast of prey ;
No life is safe against his cruel force ;
Not even that of his own fellow man !
He is but part in Nature's great domain,

Where weak succumbs to strong, and right to might !
For have you not, poor Fly, as much good right
To breathe the sweetness of this mellow air
As I, whose might indeed is more than thine ?
Forsooth, because you plague me with your drone
My might deprives you of your right to live !
If this be just, then am I justified
In striking down my brother to his death,
If he disturb me when I fain would rest !

TRUE MARRIAGE.

I N the dim nothingness of time, two souls were formed,
As like unto each other as the drops of dew
That tremble in the morning on the rose's bloom.
Alike! Indeed the same! Two parts of one Great
Whole!

Through myriad centuries of unending time
They were together.
Then the dread decree of the Great Whole came to
them ;
That they should now be parted and must be alone ;
A new and strange existence was for him marked out ;
A human frame e'en now was waiting for a soul.
They parted, woe unutterable filling them.
He sank to earth, to guide the clay assigned to him,
Shrunken and dwarfed, to suit the frame he occupied,
The memory of his former state nigh faded.
She, filled with pure, sweet longings for her other part,
Hoped yearningly and long, to hear the sweet command
That would, at length, consign her to some earthly form.

It came to her at last ; and then the glowing thought
Flashed through her glorious essence, that now indeed
She should commune with him, her pure companion
soul.

But, joined unto her earthly form, her longings slept,
And she too lost the memory of her former state.
And yet, to each some slight, faint yearning still re-
mained ;

A groping after something, what, they could not tell ;
A deep and fervent longing for some thing unknown ;
A feeling of unrest ; a sense dissatisfied.

They meet at last, the minds unknowing ; but the souls
Half recognize each other, yet half stand in doubt.

At length they grow to know each other once again,
Despite the deep disguise the fleshy clay had caused.

A sweet and subtle sense of happiness is theirs,
Merely to know and feel each other's presence near.

Their longings are at end ; the souls once more are
joined,

And joy to be together though it be in chains.

THE ICEBERG.

ONE stood I, desolate, upon the shore,
And gazed, with eager eyes, across the sea ;
Night brooded round me, and the dashing spray,
Hurled high above me, mocked me in its play ;
The gloomy sky bent darkly over me,
And warring winds blent with the ocean's roar.

A little space and angry ocean slept ;
The hurtling winds grew soft as lover's sighs ;
And through the clouds, which slunk away in
shame,
The glowing sun burst with a wondrous flame.
Then, gazing on the sea with eager eyes,
A lovely vision on my senses crept.

A palace, beautiful as poet's dream,
Fantastic as the tracery of frost ;
Each slender pillar and tall, massive spire
Flashed back the sun in jewelled sparks of fire.
I gazed, in wondering admiration lost,
Upon this castled mass of rainbow beams.

This is the home which I have searched for long,
That I have dreamed of when all else was dark ;
No more delay ; I soon shall be at rest
Within this glowing palace of the blest !
And, as from shore I pushed my little bark,
My joyous soul soared upward into song.

But, when I neared the massive, sparkling pile,
A cold breath smote upon me, like a spell ;
Through all my frame a shuddering shiver went ;
I gazed around, my soul with anguish rent ;
The sun no longer on the palace fell,
Its glory had departed like a smile.

Gray, gloomy piles of ice frowned where the light
Of shimmering jewels had so lately shone ;
Cold, icy blasts swept all the icebergs o'er,
And hurled me, freezing, back upon the shore ;
Where, as of old, I wander sad and lone,
My soul and I, in never ending night.

PESSIMISM.

LIFE is but dreary ! living is only
A passage weary, painful and lonely !
Pleasure is fleeting ! sorrow unending !
Care always greeting ! joy rarely blending !
Friendship is faithless ; though widely flaunted,
It is false, nathless, when it is wanted !
Virtue is paid for ! truth is but lying !
All we are made for is to be dying !
Love is a mystery, which in its doing,
Maketh a history many are rueing !
Life is a burden, heavy with gloom,
Having no guerdon saving the tomb !
That is the ending, sad, of our journey ;
There we are wending, fighting life's tourney !
Of the tomb hollow, only, we're certain !
What scene will follow raising the curtain ?

OPTIMISM.

LIFE is a pleasure, merely its living
Is a great treasure Heaven is giving !
Pain is not lasting ; dark clouds of sorrow,
Skies overcasting, lighten to-morrow !
Friendship's not futile, but it will ever
Hold itself true till life's chords shall sever !
Virtue's bold gleaming, from many stations,
Casts its bright beaming over the nations !
Love is a blessing by our God given,
Soothing, caressing, leading to Heaven !
Life's what we make it ; all for the best,
Just as we take it, work comes, or rest !
But a probation is our earth journey ;
Then with elation fight we the tourney !
Of the tomb hollow all are most certain
Glory will follow raising the curtain !

APPRECIATION.

ONE may possess a poet's soul,
Yet never write a measured line ;
'Tis not the rhyme or rhythmic roll
Which speaks the essence half divine.

Many there are whose fond souls swell
In time with tunes by Nature sung ;
Who see her beauty, feel her spell,
Yet cannot voice it with the tongue.

The garlands fair which Springtime weaves
To deck the earth, her new-made bride,
To some are naught but common leaves,
Unknown, unviewed or cast aside.

The flowery gems, the sparkling dew,
The murmur of the unpent rill,
The carols of the feathered crew,
The bright sun rising o'er the hill,

The hazy azure of the skies,
The glamour of the moon's soft light,
The loving watch of starry eyes,
The whisperings of the balmy night, —

To some dark souls these are unknown ;
To them this earth is common clay ;
They do not see the beauties thrown
Before their feet where'er they stray.

Believe me, I am not of those
Who worship only common things ;
Who overlook the blushing rose,
Heeding alone the thorn that stings.

F A T E .

WITHIN the shadow of a mighty tree
 A floweret grew,
As fair and beautiful as one could see
 The whole world through.

The birds sang love to it ; the honey-bee
 Assailed its heart ;
The love-lorn zephyrs whispered plaintively
 Their woes apart.

But vain and fruitless were their plaints and sighs ;
 It might not be ;
The floweret gazed, with ever longing eyes,
 Up to the tree.

But ah ! The tree gazed only at the sky
 With yearnings sweet,
Ne'er noticing the floweret's sigh,
 Low at its feet.

FORGOTTEN.

TO float upon the sea ; to turn the face
In suppliance vain up to a silent sky ;
To feel the waves' relentless, cold embrace ;
To sink, with gurgling moan, and struggling, die !

To wander in a forest till the mind
Is crazed ; the body sinks in endless sleep !
To struggle wildly 'gainst a warring wind,
Which numbs the senses in its freezing sweep !

To roam within a desert, till the hands
Clutch at the parchéd throat to ease its pain ;
To lie prostrate upon the burning sands
Until the sun has shriveled up the brain !

'Tis this to be forgotten ! this and more !
Can physical with mental pain compare ?
The body suffers, dies, and all is o'er ;
The mind unending pain and woe must bear !

IN MY HAMMOCK.

SWINGING twixt earth and sky,
Dreaming I lie ;
Nearer the twinkling stars ;
Further from jars
Of earthly pain.
Here, on my silent roof,
See I the woof,
Golden and silver shoon,
Of star and moon
Woven again.
Slowly star-shuttles spread
Bright golden thread,
Spangling the web of night
With shining light,
Till all is clear.
Plain is the starry loom ;
That of the gloom,
Weaving mysteriously,
Eye cannot see ;
Yet is it near.

IMPOTENCE.

I GAZED into the sky ; the silent light,
In fathomless immensity of space,
Thrilled me with awe, till, in the darksome night,
My soul o'erflowed with thoughts of Nature's
grace.

"These I shall voice," my soul, in rapture, said ;
"These thoughts shall glow in lines of deathless
flame ;
And they, perforce, shall live when I am dead,
That all the world may glorify my name ! "

But when I strove to hold the starlight thought
And measure it in cold and feeble speech,
I could not find the words for which I sought,
For earthly words could not so far upreach.

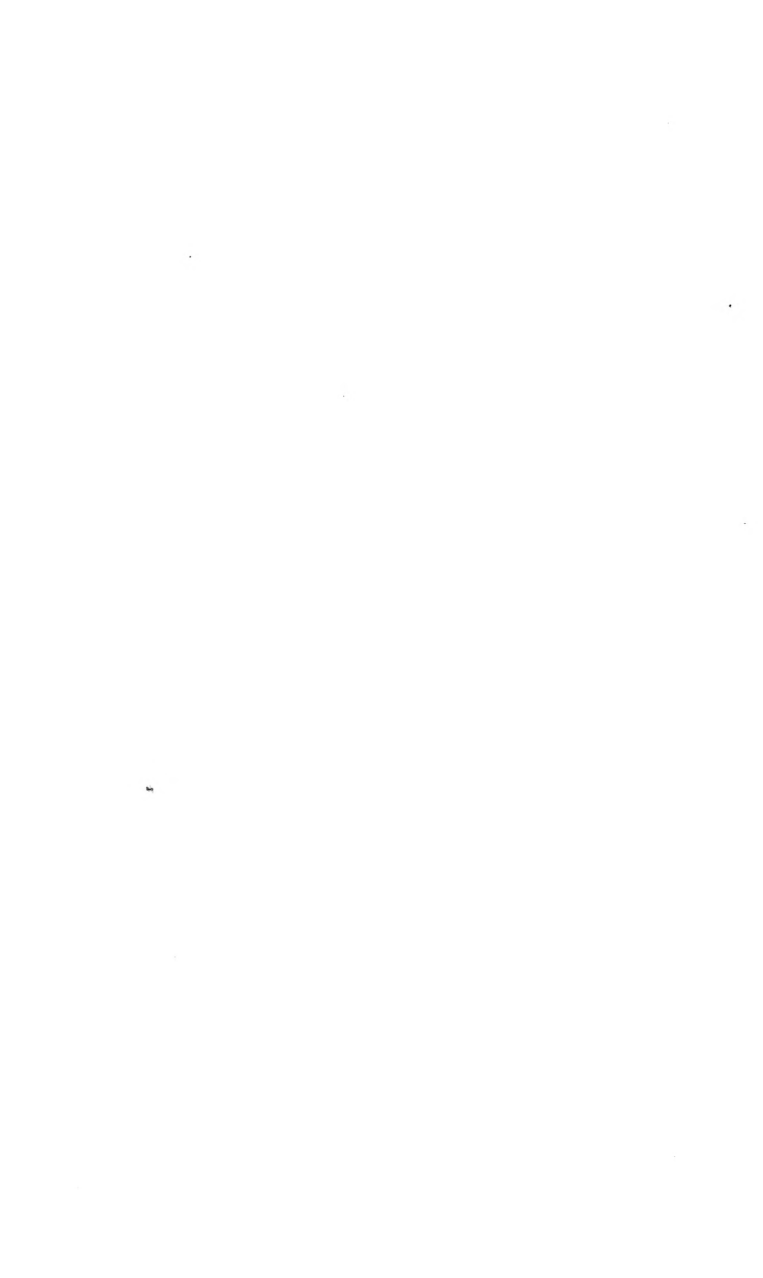
Still in my soul those grand, great thoughts remain,
In untranslatable, elusive tongue ;
They haunt me like a mystical refrain
Which seems well known, but which cannot be
sung.

CUSTOM.

CUSTOM, thou brazen thing ;
Thou patched-up relic of ill-sorted laws ;
Thou most incongruous thing, that, like a pall,
Weighs down the better nature of the world !
Thou hast more colors than the rainbow bright :
More forms and shapes deceitful dost thou have
Than the Protean monster ere could boast !
And all thy forms are false !
Yea, false as apples of the Dead Sea shore,
Which, though they glow and glitter, to the eye
Luscious and ripe, when taken in the hand
They fall to dust and ashes and are gone !
Even so are all thy forms, O Custom !
To those who do not test thee, thou art fair
And show a form exceeding full of worth ;
But if the touchstone Truth be held to thee,
Straightway thy glittering tinsel robes fall off

And leave thee as thou art, a hideous mass
Of contradiction and of rank corruption !
A mighty power, O Custom, dost thou wield :
Unto thy awful voice the trembling millions
Listen and obey and blindly follow !
A motley crowd of followers thou hast —
The king, the peasant, ignorant and wise,
The rich, the poor, the master and the slave,
The highly civilized, the low debased —
For each and all thou hast a different form,
And each in thee sees that which thou hast not.

NANTUCKET BREEZES.



NANTUCKET SAND.

O PEARLY sand, so lustrous, white and fine,
Gathered from out the pockets of the coat
That in the summer, on Nantucket's shores,
I oft did wear when pleasure led me on !
Thou art Nantucket sand, that much I know,
But more particular I cannot be.
Perhaps thou comest from the sunny "Cliffs"
Where I have watched the merry bathers dip ;
Or from "Wauwinet's" sounding double beach
Where daring fishers hunt the hungry shark ;
Or yet, perchance, from "Pocomo's" lofty head,
Whose lowly beach is strewn with sea-worn rocks ;
Or from "Koskata," where the narrow land
Just separates the lakelet from the sea ;
Or from "Coatue," where rowers love to rest ;
Or from the far off shoals of "Tuckernuck,"
Where sea-gulls yell and wheel in dizzy flight !

Thou com'st, perhaps, from "Sconset's" shelving
beach,

Where breakers roll and dash in angry might ;
Or yet from "Surfside's" bluff-surmounted shore,
Where I have watched the ocean's mighty swell,
And 'neath the moonlight in the slumbrous night
Have listened to the music of the waves !

It matters not from which of these thou com'st ;
Each one is firmly fixed in mem'ries chain
With golden setting of delightful thoughts ;
And since thou bring'st them thus unto my mind,
I'll keep thee for thy recollections sweet !

REVER Y .

A LONE upon my couch, in ease luxurious,
I lay outstretched when toilsome day was done,
When mighty Sol, of his bright rays penurious,
Had sunk in clouds, and twilight had begun.

The grim, grey shadows, solemn and mysterious,
Floated about and slowly filled the room,
And gave my musing thoughts a cast so serious
That they were steeped in sadness and in gloom.

To drive away such thoughts, a sweet Havana
I placed between my lips — a fragrant kiss —
Which acted in so magical a manner
That care and sorrow changed to joy and bliss.

I watched the smoke rise, devious and erratic,
Until it formed a car of cloudy build
In which I seemed to float with dream estatic,
And which would bear me where my fancy willed.

It bore me quickly to an Isle enchanting,
Where love and hope with joyous pleasure blend :
Where gracious Fate seemed all my wishes granting,
Except that bliss so sweet should have no end.

Once more I wandered on thy shores, Nantucket,
With one I loved, in dewy shades of night ;
Hope's radiant bud, though oft I turned to pluck it,
Bloomed fair again in beauty ever bright !

Such joys, and more, the dreamy god Nicotian
Wove through my gloomy thoughts like golden
thread,
But soon I woke and found, with sad emotion,
My hopes, like my cigar, in ashes dead.

POCOMO HEAD.

A NARROW beach bestrewn with wave-worn rocks
Whose flintiness the ceaseless ocean mocks,
Where polished pebbles, like an open page,
Proclaim the water's wearing, age on age.
A sandy bluff which once the sea did lave,
Beyond the lowest tide, with mighty wave ;
Though driven backward by the ocean's wear,
Still it uprears its head into the air
In vain defiance 'gainst the rolling surge,
Which moans and murmurs its unending dirge.
Upon thy upturned brow the sun looks down
And honors thee with star-gemmed, verdant crown !
A crown for thee indeed most rarely meet,
So like a king thou standest in defeat !

The smooth, deceitful waves before thee fawn,
Kissing thy feet in penitence forlorn,
Making obeisance to thy towering form,
To be forgotten with the coming storm !
For then in wolfish wrath on thee they'll break,
And round thy throne their foamy banners shake ;
And thou, impotent, striving 'gainst the wrack,
One more unwilling step must bear thee back !

YACHTING.

OVER the heaving, billowy seas
As free as a bird we glide ;
Our white sails, spread to the flowing breeze,
Betoken the ocean's bride.

Around us the waves in gayness dance,
Doffing each foam-covered cap,
They smilingly send, with sparkling glance,
A welcome to ocean's lap.

The bounding waves pay an homage sweet,
And decked in glistening sheen,
Roll to our side and hasten to greet
With kisses their dainty queen.

The eddying winds caressing blow
And hurry us on our way,
The bright sun beams with haloing glow,
And colors the wavelets' play.

And over the sea, with joyance bright,
Our brave yacht proudly sails,
Till the reddened sun sinks from our sight
And Night her darkness unveils.

THE TEACHER.

WITH eyes demure and face severe,
With mien the pupils all revere,
The maiden teaches school ;
Precision's robes to her adhere,
Belted by rigid Rule.

Her all the pupils venerate,
And sit before with thoughts sedate
Of love and pleasant fear ;
Thinking her one above their state,
Distant, indeed, though near.

They think of her, not as a life
Full of Love's joy and Sorrow's strife,
And prone like them to fall ;
"Teacher" she is, with precepts rife,
"Teacher," and that is all.

But often, through the heated school,
She feels the breath of ocean cool
Which seems on wings to roam
To her from well-remembered pool
Around her island home.

Above the hum of boys and girls
She hears the white surf, as it curls
In rage upon the sand,
And, in deep tones of thunder, hurls
Defiance to the land.

Instead of desks, before her eyes
She sees the billows fall and rise
Around a yacht's fair crew,
And watches each wave as it flies
Far off beyond her view.

She sees the cliff, the bluff, the street,
Where oft had trod her eager feet
In pleasure's joyous dance ;
The sheltered beach where fond hearts meet
Beneath the moonbeam's glance.

She sees them all ; the old sights creep
Around her, and her senses steep

In Memory's bright gleam ;

A shout, " 'The teacher's fast asleep ! ' "

Recalls her from her dream.

SURFSIDE.

WHITE wavelets rolling up to sing,
With muffled roar, a mystic tune ;
A sandy shore ; a summer moon ;
A silver spot on night's black wing.

A balmy breeze from southern lea ;
An odor, keen, of kelp and brine ;
A distant sheen of stars that shine
In wavy glitter on the sea.

Two dusky figures on the sand ;
A little cry ; a long, long kiss ;
A gentle sigh of perfect bliss,
Soul meeting soul, as hand meets hand.

White billows rushing from the deep
With sullen sound ; a bank of cloud ;
Gloom all around — a misty shroud ;
A wind that moans with mournful sweep.

One dusky figure on the shore ;
A stifled groan ; a longing cry ;
A weary moan of agony ;
A heart is broken ! — nothing more !

“ THE BEACH ACT.”

'TIS pleasant and jolly to sit on the beach,
But the acme of folly to sit there alone ;
A sweet, pretty maiden, with cheeks like the peach,
And lips, kisses-laden, would keep one in tone.

A roomy umbrella, to shield us from those
Who might tell her mamma of the fact
Of the coy-given kisses, with blush like the rose,
Which nobody misses while at the “ beach act.”

When hoary old Ocean seems young and in love,
With lips of devotion he kisses the Sand ;
The Sun beams with passion ; the blue Sky above
Bends down, in love fashion, and kisses the Land.

Is't then to be wondered that we do the same ?
We sure have not blundered, when Sea, Sun and Sky
Give us such example, and Nature, kind dame,
With promptings so ample stands smilingly by !

A NANTUCKET BREEZE.

SWEET breezes of Ocean, so boundless and free,
I long to be clasped in thy cooling embrace ;
Thy wings folded round me, out over the sea
I long to be borne in thy cloud-sweeping race !

Though this earth-tending clay which makes up my
frame
Cannot mount to thy car, O Monarch of air,
My thoughts, like the smoke arising from flame,
Ascend to thy throne and unite with thee there !

What freedom I gather, as with thee I play
Over mountain and lake, o'er ocean and shore !
Were it granted to me to point thee thy way,
My soul would be suited and ask for no more !

The power is granted ! My thoughts rule the wind !

“ Away then, away ! over ocean and land,
With Pleasure and Joy, leaving dull Care behind,
Bear me swift to Nantucket’s surf-beaten sand ! ”

To scenes that are pictured on Memory’s page,
With tints of the rainbow that never can fade ;
Though friendship may falter and anger may rage,
The picture but brightens, contrasted with shade !

O’er beaches and streets my thoughts wend with
delight,
Through the spots that past years with fond hopes
had crowned,
Over bluff and high cliffs that memory bright
Has thrown the soft halo of pleasure around !

Alas, that my thoughts can alone have this joy ;
That my life, Nantucket, from thee is apart !
My remembrance of thee has no base alloy ;
‘Tis an arrow of gold transfixing my heart !

MEMORY.

I WANDERED idly in the vale of thought ;
Bright Fancy walked beside me, light and free ;
With nimble feet and willing hands she brought
The choicest treasures of the vale to me.

I gazed, enchanted, on the glowing store,
Drinking the perfume with an eager zest ;
Till Fancy sweetly bade me dream no more
But take whate'er I would and leave the rest.

Three single flowers from out the mass I drew ;
A stately Lily, perfect, pure and white ;
A Pansy sweet, of brilliant, changing hue ;
A lovely Rose, in anger glowing bright.

The stems I bound with Memory's bright thread,
And round them weaved the spell of former years.
When hopes were blooming fair, which now are dead,
And life seemed smiling without sighs or tears.

Within my heart I hid the flowers away,
Nor dreamed that time would change such lovely
 gems,
But when I gazed on them, another day,
Two of the flowers had faded on their stems.

But, like a jewel in a broken ring,
The Lily bloomed, resplendent and upright ;
Time had not touched it with its gnarling sting,
Nor marred the pureness of its petals white.

I gazed, with thoughts of self-accusing grief,
Upon the buds, dead by my lack of care ;
Thinking, with sorrow, I must break the sheaf
And leave the Lily blooming lonely there.

But, when I strove to tear the flowers apart,
So firmly Memory's chain the stems had bound,
That all my will the binding could not start,
Nor break the spell of years that wrapped them
 round.

NANTUCKET SHELLS.

I WANDERED by the surging sea, which lay
Like mighty serpent basked in restless sleep.
Three shells I gathered, in the dashing spray,
Torn from the unknown caverns of the deep.

I wandered far, far from that wave-dashed shore ;
But still the rhythmic tide beat in my mind ;
For still the shells, with mimic ocean roar,
Murmured to me of Friendship, true and kind.

But soon, alas, there came a saddened time
When silent was each sympathetic shell ;
When, listen as I would, no tidal chime
Upon my ear in mystic symbol fell.

“ The sea of Memory is dry ! ” I said,

“ Its waves have all receded, leaving bare
Unsightly hulks of recollections dead,

Slime-covered rocks, of sad regret and care ! ”

.

Another time I harkened to the shells,

And lo, their music sounded as before !

Entranced, I listened to their well-known spells,

And Memory’s waves swept by me as of yore.

FAREWELL TO NANTUCKET.

NANTUCKET, farewell ! As the endless, dark surges
Roll in and are dashed on thy sand-covered shore,
Each sweet thought of thee, from the past that emerges,
Will float round my soul till life's dream is o'er !

I sail o'er the heaving, blue billows in sorrow ;
I gaze on thy coast-line, now misty and gray,
And think with a sigh that my vision to-morrow
Will rest on a scene from thy shores far away !

I know not, dear island, the reason that to thee
My heart-strings so firmly and fondly are bound ;
I feel increased sorrow and pain thrilling through me
The further I go from thy dearly loved ground !

With envy, I gaze on the snowy capped billows,
Which roll on in majesty gloomy and grand ;
For soon driving shoreward, on white foamy pillows,
They sink down to rest on thy broad beach of sand !

Each wave, as it passes my boat on the ocean,
Bears message of love in its bosom of white,
And circles thy shores, with a ring of devotion,
Thou island of pleasure, of joy and delight !

Alas ! Thy dear form with the water is blended :
And naught is before me but Ocean's huge swell !
The clouds settle o'er me ; my pleasure is ended :
The winds whistle shrilly ; " Farewell, Fare Thee
Well ! "

SONNETS.



THE VIRGIN SOUL.

HER soul is like a slumbrous, starlit night
 Brooding above a dewy garden fair ;
Half-opened buds of thought waft perfumed air,
Which breathes elusive meanings of delight ;
Dark shadows alternate with moonbeams bright ;
Sweet whispers chant faint murmurings of prayer ;
Unmeasured longings wake and linger there ;
Vague misty forms float ever in her sight.
When comes the dawn, with roseate light agleam,
Her budding thoughts shall wake to swift desire ;
Dark shadows, drowning, sink in light's rich stream ;
Faint whispers swell to song of full voiced choir.
Then shall her soul awake from twilight dream
To bask in sun of Love's eternal fire.

TO MY SISTER JENNIE.

FRIEND of the household, such indeed thou art ;
Confidress and advisor of us all :
Troubles to thee are borne, both great and small,
In all of which thou tak'st a gentle part !
Thy sweetness soothes the childish tears that start,
And sunny smiles come back at thy recall !
'Tis thy kind care removes the gloomy pall
That rests upon the careworn, elder heart !
Sister thou art, and friend ! O, blest is he
Who calls his sister friend, and brings to her
The joys that please, the griefs which make him sigh ;
Who speaks to her as soul to spirit free,
As one who understands and can confer
A sage advice ! Thus sweetly blest am I !

TO MY SISTER HORTENSE.

MY soul is haunted by dim, ghostly throngs ;
By far-off echoes of clear-voiced refrains,
The spirit bands of pure melodious strains,
Stirring remembrance of entrancing songs !
My soul, awakened, breaks the gnawing thongs
Of memories that sting with cruel pains ;
Forgets them all ; forgetting life's deep stains,
Throbs with the haunting voice for which it longs !
But Memory withers at the touch of Time ;
The haunting voice sounds fainter in my heart ;
The far-off echoes lessen as they roll !
Haste then to me, to home and native clime,
And, with thy golden music, once more start
The mystic yearnings of my saddened soul !

TO MY SISTER MARION.

“**M**AIDIE,” your life has been a frolic gay
O’er Childhood’s level plain ; around your feet
Rich flowers have blossomed, and the songsters sweet
Have carolled with you in your childish play !
No longer on this level plain you stray ;
The hill of Womanhood you now must meet,
Where pain and anxious care you oft will greet,
And earnest work fill up each coming day.
But pleasures, too, are strewn along the way ;
The mellow sun succeeds the chilling sleet ;
The cooling wind refreshes from the heat ;
And clouds of purple mix with clouds of grey !
Then upward bend your steps, nor think your work is
done,
Till, from the highest peak, you view the setting sun !

NICOTINE.

HAIL, Nicotine, thou dreamy, bland delight ;
Thou balm of care ; thou soother of the mind ;
Thou calm relief from painful thoughts that bind
The soul to sorrow gloomy as the night !
Thy sway is like the power of magic might ;
Thy influence is pleasing, sweet and kind,
Like soft embraces of the balmy wind ;
The thoughts thou bringest, joyous, clear and bright !
Then welcome be to me thou god of smoke,
Welcome thy fragrant scent, thy circling rings,
A dozen forming ere the first be broke
To melt away on fading, misty wings !
With thee I notice not the clock's dull stroke,
Nor think of sorrow that the morrow brings !

STRANGERS.

O UNKNOWN dweller of the distant West,
Are you the one I looked on in my dream?
Was yours the face, like rosy morn's first beam,
That smiled upon me in my dreamland quest?
Is yours the heart to soothe my longing breast,
And fill my soul with joy, till sorrows seem
As vague and distant as heat-lightning's gleam?
Are you that one with whom my soul can rest?
O tell me not that we are strangers cold,
That Custom would but frown upon my claim!
Friendship and Love are more than Custom old;
And mind should judge of mind, nor feel a shame
To test the rings of counterfeit and gold,
Though Custom holds them to be all the same!

REGRET.

NEVER, alas, shall I caress thee more ;
Thy path and mine, henceforth, must lie apart
Be thou content to know thou hast my heart,
That thee, and thee alone, I shall adore !
But O, that heart is wearysome and sore,
And pent-up tears of sorrow vainly start ;
Futile regret has pierced it with its dart ;
Nor can Time soothe it with his mystic lore !
Ah me, another holds the soul I should command ;
The cup of joy was brimming to my mouth,
But, like a fool, I dashed it from my hand,
And, for a recompense, now suffer drouth !
Ah, love, I long for that which I did cast
From out my heart ! Alas, it all is past !

HER FAN.

THIS is her fan, the emblem of her sway!

This frail, insensate thing finds frequent rest
Against the soft pulsations of her breast,
Feeds on her lips, unchecked by chilling nay!
And now 'tis mine! Shall I destroy its gay,
Bright, pleasing show, or heed its mute behest?
Restore it unto her! Yes, that is best!
What, jealous of a fan? Alack-a-day!
But oh, frail fan, I wish that I were you,
That she on me as freely might bestow
The honeyed pleasure of her kisses true!
That on her virgin breast of burning snow
I could but rest as thy soft plumelets do!
Ah me, what glowing bliss I then would know!

YEARNING.

WHERE art thou now, my counterpart, my life?
Is thy soul framed, as yet, in mortal clay ;
Or dost thou still in realms eternal stray,
With longings for my soul, my being rife?
Somewhere I know thou art, my spirit-wife,
And we shall meet some day, some day !
Then shall my sorrow change to pleasure gay,
And gentle peace replace my longing strife !
O glowing sun, O sparkling stars, O moon,
Help me to find her ! O ye birdlings sweet,
Wake her with song, that she may come full soon ;
That I may cast myself before her feet !
O murmuring winds, grant me this precious boon,
Waft us together that our souls may meet !

THE PRESENT IS ALL.

WHEN I am dead, let no one place, I pray,
A garland green above my weary head !
What pleasure will it be when I am dead,
If I can pluck no garland on the way ?
Mock not the senseless, unresponsive clay ;
The longing soul that made it man has fled !
Why should ye strew my grave with flowers ? Instead,
Give them to me ere night has shut out day !
What matters it to me, if, o'er my grave,
Friends raise a shaft and write, in lines of gold,
That I was noble, generous and brave ;
If while I live these things are never told ?
If, when I sink in friendless, warring wave,
No kindly hand outstretches mine to hold ?

GENERAL POEMS.

A LEGEND.

IN the far East — 'tis thus the legends run —
There lived an aged man, whose life was sweet
With ministering unto the people's needs.
They loved him fondly for his kindly deeds,
And e'en the king would rest him at his feet
And joy to hear the just one call him son.

Well versed he was in all that sages knew ;
His soul had bathed in Wisdom's rushing tide,
And washed the dross of sin and passion wild
Away, leaving the pure gold undefiled.
Some said he wandered in the star-fields wide,
And heard earth's secrets from the winds that blew.

The king had been his pupil, and e'en yet
He honored and revered him and his words.
One morning the king came to the master, sad
And gloomy faced, as one who plainly had
A heavy heart ; he noticed not the birds,
The sparkling dew, the plashing fountain jet.

“O, Master,” cried he, “Am I not the king,
The sole and sovereign ruler of my lands?
When I command must not who hears obey?
Can any one resist my mandates? say!”
“Yea, son, thou art the king, and thy commands
Must be obeyed in every rightful thing!”

The king bent down his black and bushy brows,
Gazing intently at the hoary sage.

“And who shall be the judge of what is right?
If not the king, who then; who has more right?
Must I submit my thoughts unto my page,
And get his sanction when I would carouse?”

“Nay, son, there were no need to ask thy page
When thou would'st take thy rouse; thou know'st
 'tis wrong

To cloud thy soul with wine, and thy own heart,
In judgment on thyself, takes not thy part!
Wise men, inspired by God, have labored long,
With precepts wise, to check man's senseless rage!

“Thou art the king, thou hast the harder task;
Though thou dost govern others with thy law,
Harder it is thyself to keep controlled!

There is no law for thee but what has rolled
From lips of holy men ; see that no flaw
Is in thee, for of thee God more will ask ! ”

“ But, holy one, I love with fiercest might ;
My soul is nigh consumed with burning love !
My brother’s wife — ah, that she could be mine !
And so she shall, despite thy precepts fine ;
For am I not the king, all laws above ?
Say only thou my wish is just and right !

“ For all my people love thee, and they dwell
Upon thy words and hearken to thy voice !
If thou but sanction this, my coffers wide
Shall open at thy touch, and all beside
Of power and pride shall cause thee to rejoice !
Do this, O sage, and all will yet be well ! ”

“ O king, what sayest thou ? Think’st thou that gold,
Or pride, or power, or aught would make me break
The sinless happiness of my pure state ?
Rather than that be welcome any fate !
O king, weigh well the hatred thou would’st wake
If thou should’st break the precepts writ of old ! ”

Then spake the king, uprising in his wrath,
“What care I for thy precepts ; I am king !
I love my brother’s wife ; why should he hold
Her from me — me the king, who owns his gold,
His very life ? Yea, I shall surely bring
Her home, and kill whoe’er shall bar my path ! ”

Then spake the aged one, “ If that thou dare,
O king, to do this heinous act, my hand
I shall upraise against the dastard crime ;
And with loud voice proclaim at every time,
In every place throughout thy sovereign land,
Thy wickedness, with which naught can compare ! ”

With passion gleamed the monarch’s lurid eye :
“ And thinkest thou that I shall tamely wait,
That I shall brook thy insolence, old man,
And let thy weak heart interrupt my plan ?
Rebellious slave, receive thy well-earned fate ! ”
A blow ! — “ Thus all who brave my power shall die ! ”

Down fell the sage, his white hair red with gore ;
Home fled the king as if the furies chased ;
But, ere the setting of the reddened sun,

The die was cast, the cruel deed was done.
The husband found his palace laid in waste,
And gone the choicest jewel of his store.

Indignant vengeance stirs his blood to flame;
The people thirsted to avenge their sage;
A mighty rising, like a tidal wave,
Which naught can stem, from which no one can save;
A bath of blood to glut a righteous rage;
The king, above all law, dies in his shame.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

I STOOD alone beside a mighty sea ;
The sun was rising, and its splendor fell
On leagues of foamy waves and verdant shore ;
A balmy breeze was blowing, whispering o'er
The silent beaches, a magician's spell
Which roused all things to bright activity.

My soul rejoiced, my heart was light and gay,
Responding to the fervor of the morn ;
I carolled loudly with the birds that sung
In joyous rivalry ; for I was young,
Nor thought that sorrow pale, nor grief forlorn,
Could dim the brightness of my cloudless day.

Far out, beyond the sight of white-capped waves,
On Ocean's throbbing heart, an island lay ;
Arrayed in dazzling mist, its shores did seem
Like those we see in some ecstatic dream ;
In fancy there I saw the wavelets play,
And heard them murmur in its rocky caves.

Imagination seized upon my mind
And glorified the isle, until it seemed
A country beautiful, where Nature bright
Vied with herself to make it one delight.
I spread my sails, and to the mists that gleamed
My boat was wafted by the balmy wind.

I sailed and sailed till day turned into night ;
The huge waves roared around my little bark ;
The gleaming mists, which seemed so bright and gay
When I had started, now were grimly grey ;
Great clouds rolled up, the sky grew quickly dark,
And blackness shut the island from my sight.

I scurried onwards all that night of dread,
The rushing wind impelled me ; dark despair
Had filled my soul ; as on each wave I tossed
High to the skies, I felt that I was lost ;
Yet clung I to the tiller with a prayer
That I might not be numbered with the dead.

At last the wind subsided and I slept ;
The sleep of mind and body sore opprest.
When I awoke, the day had just begun,

The heaving waves were sparkling in the sun,
And there, before my eyes, a haven blest,
The island gleamed once more ; I sang and wept.

I spread new sails, wooed every fickle breeze
To waft me to that mist-encircled shore ;
But, though I saw it, it was far away,
And soon the gorgeous mists grew once more grey ;
The swifter on I sped, receded it the more,
Just rising o'er the level of the seas.

I sailed and sailed till Night her pinions spread,
Till wild winds swept me o'er the billows white,
Crushed my frail shallop with a mighty hand,
And hurled me, senseless, to the island's strand.
In lifeless sleep I slumbered all the night,
But woke at morning, chilled with nameless dread.

I sought the verdant scenes of pleasure bright,
Which in my mind false Fancy had set down ;
I strove to find each glowing, joyous spot
That I had dreamed of, but I found them not.
Huge, barren rocks on me did darkly frown,
And all was gloomy as the starless night.

THE DYING GLADIATOR.

U. S. GRANT, MARCH 28, 1885.

PRONE now he lies, the death dew on his brow,
His life-blood reddening the arena's sand;
The sword still clasped in his courageous hand
Which oft had made the strong and haughty bow.

Faint now his spirit, weak that heart of might
Which stood undaunted 'gainst contending foe;
Nerveless the arm that laid the lion low
And crushed the tiger in the deadly fight.

How often, in the arena of the world,
His form had towered above the press of war,
While gathered nations gazed, with wondering awe,
To see his foes dismayed and backward hurled.

Now he is dying, and the pitying crowd
Seems dim and distant, and the plaudits sound
Like echoes far away; now all around
Lament is heard, and heads with grief are bowed.

THE SKATER.

HOW bracing and pure, how clear and free
Is the cool, sweet breath of the ice to me !
What glorious joy and strength I feel
As I strike the ice with my shining steel !
Talk not to me of the sparkling wine
That filleth the heart with a bliss divine,
That starts each nerve and quickens the flood
And current slow of the sluggish blood !
Wine to exhilarate can't compare
With a deep-drawn breath of the icy air,
That, whistling, sings round my rushing form
Like the piping voice of an ocean storm !
The ice-wind works with a magic might ;
My nerves are thrilled with delicious delight !
I shout ! I laugh ! I rollick ! I sing !
I'm light and free as a bird on the wing !
I circle and turn in strange device !

I dash my skates on the glimmering ice
With powerful strength that makes them ring,
And urges me forward with mighty spring !
I speed like the light ! I glide ! I fly !
I race with the wind as it passes by !
I leap and bound in my flying track,
And laugh as the fissures beneath me crack !
Hither and thither I swiftly whirl,
While sparkles of ice from my sharp skates curl !
I heed not the world, as I fly alone,
I'm king of the winter, the ice my throne !

CONSISTENCY.

A FAIR, sweet, girlish face, but full of pain and woe,
And sharp-drawn marks of sorrow and of care ;
Soft, loving, trusting eyes, but which too plainly show
The hunted look of anguish brooding there !

Within her gentle arms her babe in quiet sleeps,
The living signet of her deathless shame ;
And yet, with earnest love, she clasps its form and weeps,
Murm'ring in grief its cruel father's name.

Sneered at by her own sex — virtuous and no more —
Cast from her home, with cruel words of scorn ;
Betrayed, forsaken quite by him she did adore ;
Despairing, desolate, she stands forlorn !

Alone with her dear babe she stands upon the pier ;
Beneath her feet she hears the waters moan :
The moon shines through the clouds in splendor bright
and clear,
And looks upon the pier, deserted, lone !

And he, the heartless worker of this cruel wrong,
What punishment has earth in store for him?
His idle life is spent in pleasures sweet and long,
And joy fills up his goblet to the brim !

For he is loved and courted, though his sin is known ;
The very lips that scorned the girl betrayed
Are wreathed in sweetest smiles and breathe their gentlest tones
For the betrayer in his crime arrayed !

GEORGIE'S LETTER.

WHAT is it I hold to my heart all the while?
What is it I kiss and bedew with my tears?
"It must be most precious," you say, with a smile,
"To waken such pleasures, such joys and such
fears!"

Precious, you say! Ah, more precious than treasure,
This letter from Georgie, my far-away boy;
Loving and longing is mine, without measure,
To clasp to my bosom my God-given joy!

"The letter is naught but a scratch and a blot!"
To you it may be, but to me 'tis a book
I read it so plainly; there is not a spot
On the paper from which my boy does not look!

I see his bright curls and his dear, winsome face,
His fat, chubby fingers, half holding the pen ;
I almost imagine I feel his embrace
As his letter I kiss, again and again !

Ah, friend, you know naught of the symbols of love
Which mothers can read in a letter like this ;
You know not the feeling, all symbols above,
Which speaks to the soul in language of bliss !

MY FRIEND.

HE is faithful, kind and true,
He is fond and loving, too,
Is my friend !
He would every thing endure,
He would die for me, I'm sure,
Would my friend !

He is glad when I am glad,
He is sad when I am sad,
Is my friend !
He would still be mine, I know,
If all other friends should go,
Would my friend !

He's not one to think of self ;
He loves me for myself,
Does my friend !
Were I old and poor and lame,
He would love me just the same,
Would my friend !

You're surprised, no doubt, and say,
Of what more than mortal clay

Is my friend?

What more great than mortal man,
What pure angel-being can

Be my friend?

He's the only perfect kind
Of a friend that I can find,

Is my dog !

He's my only steadfast friend,
And will be till life shall end,

Will my dog !

THE FAIRY HARP.

THERE is a harp, of beauty bright,
Which hangs where many pass ;
And eager seekers of delight
Have tried it, but alas,
No skillful touch the music brings ;
The fairy harp is yet unplayed,
And silent are its strings.

Minstrels of fame and high renown
Have tried to wake its tone —
Have thrown it from them with a frown,
And said their skill had flown.
And still the harp hangs silently,
Waiting for one to touch its strings
And wake its melody.

There is but one, of all the earth,
Can cause that harp to sing ;
He may be of but little worth,
Or he may be a king ;
But he, alone, the strings can thrill,
And with love's sweetest melody
Its throbbing being fill.

WITH A GIFT OF CIGARETTES.

WITHIN the hollow of this paper white,
Is snugly stowed the source of much delight.
Some moralists declare it is pernicious,
But I uphold that it is most delicious.

'Tis strange, that what we like the most in life,
Is said, by saints, to be with evil rife ;
And when we try to sail in seas Elysian,
We strike a moral rock with sure precision.

Why should it be that Evils always smile,
And Virtue wears a mask of gloom the while ?
Must I, indeed, be classed as irreligious
Because my love for beauty is prodigious ?

I love to gaze into a woman's eye,
To press her lips and hear her gentle sigh ;
And yet "The Fathers" say, she's a delusion
Made by the Devil for our soul's confusion.

My mind, more liberal, tells me to view
With deep suspicion things of gloomy hue,—
To shun the snivelling and the misanthropic
Who claim that virtue is but microscopic.

My creed allies me firmly unto those
Who read a sermon in the blushing rose ;
Who, in the face of one's affinity,
Beholds the impress of Divinity.

So, though stern moralists say it is wrong,
I send you this tobacco, with a song,
That you, as I, whene'er you have the notion,
May revel in the bliss of fumes nicotian.

LILIES.

YOU bring me lilies? Do you wish to see
A man in tears? Then take your lilies hence!
Be not offended that I bid you go;
There are some pains transcending common woe,
Some memories which strike upon a sense
More subtle than regret can ever be!

The sight, the odor, aye the very thought
Of lilies fills me with a nameless dread;
An impotent regret of ruined love;
A baffling struggle 'gainst a will above
My puny will; a longing, ever vain,
For what to me can never more be brought!

I loved, — you smile! — Yes, I am old and gray,
My head is bowed, my form is frail and weak;
But in this heart, unchilled by passing age,
There lies such passion, such a burning rage
Against unyielding Fate, that I could wreak
Harsh vengeance on a world that barred my way!

But O, the pain of impotent design ;
The striving 'gainst inexorable will ;
The mockery of mind ! I, who would fight
Against the very gods with reckless might,
Grow weak and tremble, feel my heart-beats still
Before the breath of lilies, such as thine !

MOTHER'S SONG.

S LUMBER my little one, rest on my arm ;
Mama will keep thee from sorrow and harm ;
Drop thy lids heavy, o'er eyes of deep blue ;
Slumber my darling while mama rocks you !
Sleep, baby dear, shadows are falling,
Sleep, baby dear, angels are calling !

Ah, the dear face, so pure and so white,
With eyes of deep azure, and curls sunny-bright !
Now the head, weary, sinks low on my breast ;
Mama will watch o'er her darling's soft rest !
Sleep, baby dear, shadows are falling,
Sleep, baby dear, angels are calling !

Rest thee, my darling, through shadows of night,
On mama's fond heart so full of delight !
Rest thee, my loved one, till morning's bright beams,
Till birdlings awake thee from sweet angel dreams !
Sleep, baby dear, shadows are falling,
Sleep, baby dear, angels are calling !

A SUMMER TEMPEST.

DEEP in the shadow of o'erhanging trees,
On carpet soft of grasses fresh and green,
Fanned by the breath of perfume-laden breeze,
I lie at ease, watching the sunlight's sheen.

The daisies nod a welcome to their bed,
Their hearts pure gold, their petals snowy white ;
The buttercups upturn each yellow head,
Shining within the grass like sunlets bright.

The hum of locusts falls upon mine ear —
The shrill monotony my senses steep ;
But through its drone I hear the tinklings clear
Of the swift brook which never rests or sleeps.

O'erhead the boughs are waving soft and slow,
Revealing glimpses of the azure sky,
On which white clouds are sailing to and fro,
Making more deep the blue in which they lie.

A drowsy solemnness broods all around ;
The locust's hum is hushed, and save the mirth
Of the swift-rushing brook, silence profound
And steadfast calm rests on the heated earth.

Now low upon the clear horizon's verge
The wind-clouds rise and to the zenith roll,
Like ocean's mighty billows, surge on surge,
Until the sky is covered with their dole.

Swift from its bosom leaps the rushing blast ;
The tree-tops sway and toss with mighty moan,
Bending their heads until the storm be passed,
While branches huge break with a crashing
groan.

The leaves and boughs are whirled along the track
Of the tornado with a savage might,
And naught can now be seen but piled-up wrack
Where was before but peace and calm delight.

THE PRISONER AND THE BIRD.

FLY forth, poor bird, and circle through the air ;
Beat thy strong wings within the azure clear ;
Open thy feathers, as thou erst had done,
And bask thee in the brightness of the sun ;
I will no longer keep thee captive here,
Making thee sharer of my lonesome care !

Fly gaily forth and seek thy long-lost mate ;
Search all the earth until you meet again ;
Then warble unto her thy rippling song,
Telling the sadness of the parting long ;
Build her a nest within some shady fen,
And live in peace, far from my captive gate !

Ah, how thou soarest straight into the sky ;
How sweet to thee the breath of freedom seems !
O, would that I, like thee, could fly away,

And feel the air of freedom round me play !
Could I but listen to the bubbling streams
That flow about my home, once ere I die !

But no, it cannot be, I here must stay ;
But my firm soul no chains can ever bind ;
The burning thoughts that fill my mind are free,
And they can wander forth upon the sea
Of Memory vast, and mourn the hopes they find
Strewn thick upon its shores, all cast away !

My soul has wings more powerful than thine,
And sweeps through space unmeasured, without fear ;
With talons strong and pinions widely spread,
It grasps the memories of years now dead,
And bears to me whatever is most dear,
Until once more I seem to feel them mine !

But ah, these memories afflict me more,
With their sweet pain, than could a perfect blank !
I long and long, with earnest, yearning prayer,
To be in body with my spirit there ;
But I must sit, within my dungeon dank,
Counting each moment till my life is o'er !

But what is this upon my window-stone ?
My little bird ! And hast thou then returned ?
Are thy hopes dead, that thou forsak'st the free,
Pure breath of day to share this cell with me ?
Thou ne'er could'st know how I for thee have yearned,
Almost I smile for I am not alone !



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